

WASHINGTON, DC—Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) supported three bills to improve benefits and services to veterans provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The House of Representatives passed all three bills by voice vote on March 30, 2009, and they will soon be considered by the U.S. Senate.

H.R. 1513, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2009, co-sponsored by Congressman Sestak, would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the rates of basic compensation for disabled veterans and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation to their survivors and dependents, along with other benefits, in order to keep pace with the rising cost-of-living. The adjustment would become effective December 1, 2009, and would be equal to that provided on an annual basis to Social Security recipients.

H.R. 1377 would expand veteran eligibility for reimbursement by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for emergency treatment furnished in a non-Department facility, and for other purposes. This bill would expand veteran eligibility to require the VA to pay for emergency treatment for a non-service connected condition if a third-party is not responsible for paying for the full cost of care. The bill clarifies that the VA only pay the difference between the amounts paid by the third-party and the VA allowable amount, and is not responsible for copayments the veteran owes to the third party.

H.R. 1171, the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Reauthorization Act of 2009, would reauthorize the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program for fiscal years 2010 through 2014. The bill was amended to authorize an additional \$10 million to provide dedicated services for homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children. Grants would be made available to provide job training, counseling, placement services, and child care services to expedite the reintegration of veterans into the labor force.

“Having served as a U.S. Naval officer for 31 years and as the son of a WWII Veteran, I have no higher priority than the welfare of those who wore the cloth of this Nation and their families. Identifying their needs and then finding the ways and means to address those needs in a comprehensive and responsible way has been among my highest priorities since assuming office,” the Congressman said. “That’s why I’m proud to support this important legislation today, and that’s why I’m holding my Third Annual Veterans Summit on May 11 at Ridley High School. Last year’s Veterans Summit drew over 300 veterans and their families. The 7th Congressional District has 54,000 Veterans—from the World War II generation of my father to those recently returning from the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. My District Office, which is open seven

days a week, has handled over 1,200 Veterans cases.”

The Third Annual Veterans Summit will be held Monday, May 11, 2009, from 6-9pm at Ridley High School, in Folsom. To sign up for the Summit, please visit http://www.sestak.house.gov/upcoming_events.shtml

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of “Deep Blue,” the Navy’s anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the “Global War on Terrorism.” He served as President Clinton’s Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.

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